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August 21, 2002

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Thomas L. Garthwaite, M.D. 
Director and Chief Medical Officer

SUBJECT: **NEEDLE EXCHANGE PROGRAM CERTIFICATION**

On August 29, 2000 the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors (Board) instructed the Department of Health Services to develop a plan to certify needle exchange programs within the County of Los Angeles on a replacement basis. This is to update you on our next steps to begin the certification process.

A Needle Exchange Certification Plan was developed in April 2001, in consultation with the Narcotics and Dangerous Drug, HIV Health Services, and Public Health Commissions, the HIV Prevention Planning Committee, the Second District HIV/AIDS Coalition, the Los Angeles City AIDS Coordinator, the Sheriff's Department and current needle exchange service providers. Since that time a detailed set of guidelines (the Policies and Procedures Manual for Certified Needle Exchange Programs) and a certification agreement document were developed and reviewed by County Counsel (attached).

Following review by County Counsel, it was determined that certification of needle exchange programs could proceed under signature by the Health Officer. Existing needle exchange programs will be offered the opportunity to apply for certification. The certification review process will include a site visit, review of staff training, record keeping procedures, insurance and liability information and review of efforts made to educate and inform the community, law enforcement and city officials about needle exchange services.

Programs meeting the certification requirements will agree to administer their needle exchange programs according to County guidelines. Upon successful completion of the certification process, providers will be designated as "certified needle exchange programs" in the County of Los Angeles consistent with Section 11364.7 of the California Health and Safety Code. No funding will be provided to needle exchange programs as a part of the certification.

In the next several weeks Public Health will:

- Reconvene with the Needle Exchange Certification Program work group to discuss the certification process;
- Release a certification application announcement for existing needle exchange programs;
- Review programs applying for certification; and
- Certify needle exchange programs meeting certification requirements.

We anticipate returning to you with an update on the certification process in 90 days. In the meantime, if you have any questions or need additional information please let me know.

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Enclosure

c: Chief Administrative Officer
County Counsel
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs Commission
Commission on HIV Health Services
Public Health Commission